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SENSITIVE

FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

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SUBJECT: MAJOR DONORS DISCUSS FAO INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION, AND FAO AND IFAD ELECTIONS

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11. (U) Summary: Rome-based representatives of the "Geneva Group" (top 14 UN contributors) met on 28 January to plan next steps in the Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO. They agreed on a general approach to the organization and governance of the IEE Intersessional Working Group (ISWG), and welcomed an offer by the U.S. and Canada to draft a paper on this. They called for solidarity in meeting the costs of the IEE (Switzerland and the U.S. have already contributed to the start-up phase of the IEE, and the UK, Sweden and Canada intend to announce contributions to the process shortly). The Group also discussed the elections for Director General of FAO and for President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). End summary.

12. (U) Geneva Group representatives met at the U.S. Mission on 28 January, under the chairmanship of UK Ambassador Matthew Wyatt. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland participated (France was the only major donor unable to attend).

IEE

13. (SBU) During about 90 minutes of discussion, members generally agreed on the following points:

-- There is a role for the Geneva Group as a forum for coordination and exchange of ideas on the IEE, but policy decisions should be left to the regional groups, and the Geneva Group should generally avoid taking public positions as a block, so as to avoid North-South polarization of IEE matters.

-- The IEE Intersessional Working Group (ISWG) should aim to complete its work before June 2005, if possible, and should strive to minimize costs.

-- The proposal for a 7-member ISWG Bureau, with representatives from each regional group, seems to be gaining momentum among ISWG participants. Before such a structure could be accepted, the Bureau's responsibilities would have to be delineated clearly.

-- To carry out its work, the ISWG needs an independent expert/adviser to manage the process. To accelerate the selection of this expert/advisor, members should consult their capitals and transmit names of recommended experts with curriculum vitae to the ISWG Chairman.

-- The FAO Secretariat can play a useful role in the IEE in two ways: (1) by providing clerical and administrative support, possibly on a cost-reimbursable basis, and (2) by offering ideas and advice to the ISWG, provided that these are filtered through the independent expert/adviser so that the Secretariat does not capture or control the IEE process.

-- Terms of reference (TOR) for the IEE should be drawn up by independent experts on the basis of a clear mandate from the ISWG. A seminar to help the ISWG to clarify this mandate could be useful.

-- The IEE requires solidarity among members to cover the costs of both the preparatory phase and the evaluation itself. (Switzerland has contributed \$40,000 already; the U.S. has earmarked \$250,000 in FY 2005, 10% of which

would be available very shortly, and the UK expects to make a similar contribution; Sweden expects to contribute at least \$100,000; Canada intends to contribute soon. Other Geneva Group members and the EC are considering making contributions, but several prefer to see the final TOR before making a commitment.)

14. (SBU) It was reported that the ISWG Chair, Brazilian Permrep Flavio Perri, plans to hold the next meeting of the ISWG during the week of 21 February. In preparation for this meeting, and in recognition of the next EU and European Regional Group coordination meetings scheduled for 8 February, Geneva Group members took note of the following next steps:

-- Geneva Group members should work through their respective regional groups to ensure a response to Chairman Perri's letter of 17 January.

-- Before 8 February, the North America Group will prepare a draft paper outlining its views on the IEE process (drawing on the Geneva Group discussion), and will discuss it with Ambassador Perri and circulate a revised draft prior to the 21 February ISWG.

-- FAO Council Independent Chairman Mekouar is expected to send a letter to all FAO members, encouraging contributions to the IEE process.

-- The US plans to present through its embassies a demarche to OECD, Gulf and other likely donor governments to urge their financial support for the IEE.

FAO AND IFAD CANDIDACIES

15. (SBU) Members discussed the contest for Director General of FAO. It was noted that thus far the incumbent Jacques Diouf is the only official candidate, but that another government may be considering a nomination. U.S. Acting Permrep said that Secretary Powell, in connection with the candidacy for Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, had publicly reaffirmed the position (described also as the position of the Geneva Group in Vienna) that heads of UN agencies should be allowed only two terms. EU delegates indicated that there was still some ambiguity regarding the EU position of term limits at FAO. There was some discussion about prospects for other candidates.

16. (SBU) The Geneva Group also discussed latest developments regarding the upcoming election of IFAD President, following the nomination by Indonesia of a challenger to the Swedish incumbent the terms of the discussion and lay down guiding principles. The early USG contribution to IEE start-up

costs and our pledge to contribute a substantial sum to the IEE itself have sent a strong, positive signal. The Geneva Group in Rome offers a useful sounding board and forum for exchange of ideas, and it is also a mechanism to begin mobilizing contributions to the IEE; but we will need to follow up in capitals of likely donor governments, including selected G-77 governments.

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